

Vamsivat Babaji

Vamsivat Babaji was a Gaudiya sadhu who lived at Swarupa Gunj during the time of Srila Bhaktisiddhanta Saraswati's mission. He was respected by Srila Bhaktisiddhanta, and he used to see to it that Vamsivat Babaji was provided with grains and so on by Gaudiya Matha brahmacaris, whom he'd send to Swarupa Gunj from the Yoga Pitha Mandir.

One day, a lady selling fish approached V.B., offering him some choice type of catch. Somehow or other, the Babaji's mind became attracted to tasting the fish. But he immediately checked himself, and became very angry. He first of all shouted at the woman to get away. Then he was shouting, "How could this happen? How could this happen? I've surrendered my life to Radha Krishna, I'm under Their protection, and still this happens! Why You are not protecting me?"

He went storming into his bhajan kutir. People gathered while he fussed and fumed at his Deities inside. Then he came out, bringing the Deities tied by rope, and threw Them into the Ganga. He kept the end of the rope under his foot. When one man inquired why he was doing this, the Baba threw a rock at him.

When this news reached the Gaudiya Matha Mandir, Srila Bhaktisiddhanta called his brahmacaris together and forbade them from visiting this baba again, save for one who would just deliver supplies. After a few days, he again called them together and said, "Some of you think I've stopped you from visiting babaji maharaja because he is in maya. That is not so. But you are not able to understand this bhava. So stay away."

Later, when that one brahmacari visited, V.B. threw a stone at him and told, "If you want to please me, then never return here again!"

Previously his reception had always been unpredictable. Sometimes the Baba would welcome him. Sometimes he would accept the gifts without saying a word. Sometimes he would just sit and stare. Sometimes he would take the gifts and angrily throw them in the river.

Koti Baba

In South India, Atma•Tattvaji was taken to an old palace by four acquaintances to meet one Koti Baba. The palace belonged to one family whose forefathers had been zamindars. Three generations before, the zamindar had gone hunting in the nearby forest and shot an elephant. Just then a baba came out of the jungle and stopped the zamindar, saying "You cannot kill any elephant here, they are under my protection." The baba then extracted the bullet from the elephant's body and rubbed some herbs on the wound, healing the elephant before the zamindar's eyes. The elephant got up and left. Seeing that this baba had extraordinary powers, the zamindar begged him to bless his family. The baba advised him to stop hunting, and bring his family to that place on the new moon day.

So the zamindar began this custom, every dark moon day bringing his family to that place in the forest, offering some rice and receiving some instruction. The zamindar gave up meat•eating this way.

The tradition was carried on over three generations until modern times, with the original baba still living. The baba told the father of the present generation to move him to a special room in their palace because he was getting old. He directed that the room be built on the roof. This room is not much more than a closet, with a shelf•like bed in it. One can neither stand up straight nor stretch out while laying in this room.

Every dark moon day the baba gives audience to whomever comes. He sits on a dais on the roof and the people are ushered into his presence;

they may put questions or make requests for boons, etc. Otherwise he stays in his cramped quarters, unseen by anyone for the rest of the month.

So, Atma•Tattva came there. He went in with the crowd. He had the second place for an audience with the baba, behind one other man. The baba looked very ancient. He was frail and staring, and his hands were knotted with age. He was clad in one knee•length coat and wore a funny cap on his head.

In the beginning he was given a ball of rice. He only ate on this day, just one handful of rice. Then the first man could speak. He explained to the baba that he was having difficulty getting his driver's license, that it was lost in one office or another, and could the baba please tell him where he could recover the license.

The baba exploded with fury and shouted some unintelligible words. The man was hustled out. The baba settled down again, muttering "Koti, koti." Then Atma•tattva's friends stepped forward to introduce him as an old associate who had become a sadhu. No mention of Hare Krishna was made. Atma came up with a Tamil Bhagavad•gita and presented it to the baba.

The baba again muttered, "Koti, koti." He didn't look at the book. Then he said, "He went to America, what did he do? And that other also went there, what did he do? So many went to America, what did they do? Nothing."

Then he looked at Atma and asked, "So how is it going?" Atma answered,

"There are millions of people in every country around the world hearing and chanting Krishna's holy name." The old baba smiled and clapped his gnarled hands. Then he took Atma to see his room. He opened the door to it, and it was filled with cobwebs. He said, "I never leave this room except on these days. And otherwise I eat nothing. I pass no urine or stool. I don't want to accept another body." Then he told Atma's four friends:

"Vivekananda went to America, and he did nothing. So you stay with these people, they are doing something."

Then he signed a paper for Atma•tattva. All other darshans were cancelled for the rest of that day.

There was one baba whose devotees built him a room. His body grew to fill that room and they built him a bigger one. His body grew to fill that room. When Atma saw him, he was simply talking the most strange things. Then soon after that he left his body. He also was not passing stool or urine.

Naga Babas

Atma once went into the Himalayas. He was staying at one ashram. Then he decided to go see Nilakantha Mahadeva, a Shiva•linga over which a waterfall pours (not a temple, just a place). He told the head of the ashram that he'd go there and come back, but the head answered, "Yes, you may go, but you may not come back." Naga babas were camped just above Nilakantha Mahadeva. They carry tridents, walk naked, and are wild and dangerous. Atma saw one with his genital stretched out and wrapped three times around his waste.

So he went to Nilakantha Mahadeva. He slept there also. It was scary, but nothing happened. Then he took the footpath up, in the direction of the Naga babas. He met a mother and daughter, who threw stones at him. Then he saw a cave. A crazed looking baba was there, with long fingernails. The daughter came in, gave milk, he threw it in the fire. The mother came in, gave dough, he made two chapatis, and threw one up into a chamber of the cave above. It didn't come down. Then he ate the other, which by this time was coal black, because it had been sitting in the fire too long.

A passer•bye said the baba was 200 years old. Atma stayed two nights there, but the baba never spoke. When he started to leave, the baba then spoke: "Don't go up, go down." Atma went down.